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Newfoundland and Labrador Paralympian off to Beijing

The Honourable Danny Williams, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, today offered best wishes to 15-year-old Katarina Roxon of Kippens as she prepares to compete at the 2008 Paralympic Summer Games taking place from September 6- 17 in Beijing, China.

"As a province, we couldn't be prouder of our Olympic and Paralympic athletes and Katarina is certainly no exception," said Premier Williams. "Katarina's drive is an inspiration to young athletes across the province. Her unwavering determination will undoubtedly help her excel as she competes among some of the greatest athletes in the world."

Ms. Roxon was born without part of her left arm, yet she holds provincial, national and world swimming records and regularly competes against able-bodied athletes – and wins. She trains with the Island Wahoos swim club and is co-coached by her parents, Leonard and Lisa Roxon. Her parents, along with sister Miranda, will be in Beijing to cheer her on during this milestone in her athletic career.

The Honourable Clyde Jackman, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, also extended well-wishes to Ms. Roxon as she gets ready to depart for the 2008 Summer Games.

"Katarina has already accomplished so much by becoming a member of the national Paralympic swim team," said Minister Jackman. "We will all watch with pride as she competes and I have no doubt that she will be an extraordinary representative for our province and country."

Ms. Roxon leaves tomorrow (Thursday, August 21) for Vancouver where she will meet the other 20 athletes of the Canadian Paralympic swim team. The next day, the team departs for Osaka, Japan, for a two-week training camp before heading to Beijing. Ms. Roxon's events include the 100m butterfly, 100m breaststroke, 200m IM and 50m freestyle. In the four events, her world rankings range from an impressive 12th to 15th.

"I congratulate Katarina and her coaches for the hard work and dedication it takes to compete at the Olympic and Paralympic Games," said Premier Williams. "A trip to the games is monumental in any athlete's career and Katarina is a shining example of yet another athlete from this province about to make a mark on the world stage."

Newfoundland and Labrador recently signed on as a contributing province to the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games being held in Vancouver, British Columbia. The $1.5 million investment includes $750,000 for the Own the Podium 2010 program, which supports Canadian athletes in their preparation for the games.

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